

CITY OF MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN
FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT
GUIDELINES &
APPLICATIONS

MISSION

As part of its effort to invest in projects that promote and use design for revitalization and economic redevelopment, the City of Muskegon believes the funds through the Façade Improvement Grant program will stimulate property owners and long-term leasees to improve the physical appearance of their place of business.

TERMS

The Façade Improvement Grant requires a match of 1 to 1 with a maximum grant of \$5,000 for each application per year. The grant is an incentive and should not be considered to fund the entire façade improvement project in full. This is a reimbursement-oriented program to ensure that proposed work is done appropriately and consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

ELIGIBILITY

Priorities shall be given to projects that:

- Promote façade design that is consistent with the time period during which the structure was built, if the structure is located within an established historic district. All other eligible commercial structures shall create a positive visual impact. A large portion of the grant shall be applied to improvements for the first floor elevation, more particularly to opening up storefronts, where feasible.
- Coordinate with other projects in proximity and/or adjacent for coherence, compatibility, rhythm, proportion, balance, and scale. For projects along Getty Street, they must also meet the design criteria stipulated in the Getty Street Corridor Study; and for projects that are within an historic district or has historic significance, they must meet the Muskegon Historic Preservation Design Guidelines.
- Promote façade designs that contribute to and improve the aesthetics of the building as well as the area where it is located. Landscaping and parking lot improvements are encouraged but they are not eligible. Aesthetics in this case shall not only include window or door replacement but may include the following façade design enhancement: installation of awnings, accent wall finish, picture windows, elaborate entrance, appropriate plant boxes, etc. Proposals for façade improvements that are predominantly finished with vinyl siding, inappropriate materials or materials that are not permanent in nature, and proliferation or continuation of non-conforming status, will not be considered. Buildings that incorporate stone or brick façade finish, or other architectural materials to enhance the appearance of the building, will be considered more favorably.
- Have evidence of financial resources substantial enough to implement the proposed façade improvements; or the ability to secure financing through a local bank within 30 days from date of grant application approval.

WORK NOT ELIGIBLE

Since the Façade Improvement Grant program aims to enhance the aesthetic appearance of commercial buildings, the following are not eligible under this initiative:

- Residential structures whether used primarily for residence, partly or entirely used for home-based business, or been converted into commercial use. Unless such structure is located within an established historic district; or the proposed façade improvement includes reconstruction to depict the visual effect of a commercial building, it may not be considered.
- Landscaping and other beautification projects that may compliment but are not integral parts of the building per se. An example includes but not limited to resurfacing of parking lots, installation of buffer features, canopies, driveways, signage (attached or on premise), etc. Exterior lighting fixtures that are appropriate, attached to the façade and contribute to the aesthetics and safety of the building will be considered.
- Any type of work that is not appropriate to the building's design, or that may instead create a negative impression (such as small windows, reducing window size, wrought iron bars on windows, non-proportional window openings, sheet metal and anything that appears "unfriendly"). Unless such features are integrated parts of an architect's design to reflect spatial function, and create visually pleasing effect, it cannot be considered.
- Replacement work that does not make a significant positive impact to the visual appearance of the building. The goal of the grant program is to transform commercial buildings that are showing signs of disrepair or dilapidation into an architecturally appealing structure, mainly on its front elevation. For corner lots, both sides of the building facing the street may be taken into consideration.

REVIEW CRITERIA

All applications are reviewed on a competitive basis, i.e., the City does not ensure that every proposal will be approved. The review process will take place once all the required documentation and supporting evidence is submitted. The City will make an announcement to receive applications, along with a deadline for submission. The review process will commence when all applications are received. Incomplete applications will not be considered. **A grant will not be awarded to projects where construction has commenced prior to grant approval.**

The following criteria will be used:

- Letter of Intent. Applicant will demonstrate the need for financial assistance, how this will give a positive impact to the community, and their commitment to property maintenance.
- Proposal Description. Applicant will submit detailed description of the proposed improvement, including drawings, sketches, pictures, specifications, and estimated project costs. Only direct costs to a façade improvement are considered for reimbursement (materials and labor cost for the façade work) and an architect's

professional fee. Other cost, such as demolition and clearing of debris, are not considered as a direct cost.

- Financial Evidence. Applicant will submit evidence of his/her ability to complete the project, financially. The Façade Improvement Grant is a reimbursement program. Hence, projects not completed on the grant year shall not receive the financial assistance.
- Architectural Merit. Applicant will demonstrate the potential of enhancing the quality of the resulting work; the potential of the work to serve as a catalyst for future community development; and the potential of a long-term economic development as a result of this work.

DESIGN COMMITTEE

Subcommittee for the site plan review (existing) and Planning Department staff will evaluate all applications. The City may seek input from various interest groups including but not limited to: individuals with architectural background, an area merchant, a representative from the neighborhood, financial institution, the Muskegon Oceana Reinvestment Corporation, and the Muskegon Community Foundation.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS FROM ANOTHER MICHIGAN COMMUNITY:



BEFORE



AFTER

Opening up storefront windows, adding an awning on the entry, and softening the signage made the building look more appealing.



BEFORE



AFTER

Reduction of sign and awning size, maintaining storefront windows, and other features help create pedestrian-conducive atmosphere. The example provides features that are balanced proportionately without losing the historic character.



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

Reducing sign size on the new awning helps make the building look more “respectable” while keeping its historic character. Other awning color may have been selected (such as forest green or burgundy) to more closely relate to a building’s exterior wall finish, but deep blue color to contrast the wall finish also creates a vibrant effect.

APPLICATION FOR FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT

City of Muskegon
933 Terrace Street
P.O. Box 536
Muskegon, MI 49440
231-724-6702

PARCEL NUMBER:
DATE SUBMITTED:
DATE RECEIVED:

<i>Please type or print all information. Incomplete information may delay the processing of this application.</i>	
NAME OF APPLICANT:	Name and phone number of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:
COMPLETE BUSINESS MAILING ADDRESS (No PO Box):	
COMPLETE PROPERTY ADDRESS (if different from above):	PRESENT USE:
	PROPOSED USE:
DESCRIBE PROPOSED WORK AND ATTACH OTHER REQUIREMENTS (Use additional sheets if necessary):	Space below for Staff Comments:

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: _____

Note: Information contained in this application and supporting documentation may be subject to review by the public if a Freedom of Information request is filed.